

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Iraq

Post: Baghdad

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

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Agriculture in the News

Agricultural Trade Office Activities

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Report Highlights:

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE- *Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq* -
Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad-December 2013

General Information:

Let Them Eat U.S. Beef... Sometime Soon We Hope!: By its recent decision #185, The Food Safety Advisory Board (FSAB) failed to lift the ban on U.S. beef. The FSAB made reference to the request made by the Economic Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad to lift the ban on US Beef in a statement from its meeting no. 185 (in November 2013) failed to lift the ban. The basis of the ban was a report of The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) that reclassified the US as having “negligible risk” for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy disease in accordance with section (11-Fifth) of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, in May 2013. The FSAB is to decide to consider this again in its (January 2014) next meeting.

Ministry of Agriculture announced that it has adopted technical expertise and equipments to detect food fraud in meat as a measure towards food safety: The Ministry of Agriculture / Veterinary Services Company has introduced for the first time the Elisa techniques and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) methods in identifying meat fraud. It was reported that the local market was flooded with substandard food products that requires government intervention.

Keep The Wheat And Rice Comin’ - In (November 2013?) The Ministry of Trade (MOT) issued wheat and rice tenders for the supply of 50,000 and 30,000 MT respectively. The wheat tender was restricted to the following origins: the United States, Canada and Australia. The closing date was November 17 (and the Grain Board decided to buy Ukraine wheat). As for the rice tender, the Iraqi Grain Board’s specifications were for long grain rice from one of the following origins: U.S., Uruguay, Argentina or Brazil. For those offering medium grain, the permitted origins were Egypt, U.S., Spain or Australia (the Grain Board decided to buy rice, US. Company won the tender).

Who’s In Charge of Domestic Food Assistance?: The Council of Ministers (COM) postponed the implementation of their earlier decision to delegate responsibility for food ration distribution (PDS) to the provinces. Iraq's cabinet decided to postpone the decision to transfer authority of the PDS from the Ministry of Trade (MOT) to the provinces until July 2014. The previously established decentralization of PDS administration had been set for January 2014. MOT was expected to hold on to their authority to distribute Flour and delegate the responsibilities for the other items such as rice, sugar, cooking oil and infant formula.

Milking Dutch Cows: In November 2013, for the first time in ten years, Iraq imported Holstein Friesian heifers for milk production from the Netherlands: A private Iraqi company called Natural Green imported 155 heifers out of total licensed maximum of 662 heifers. Over the last ten years, there have been very few shipments of bred heifers from major international shippers. Iraq’s dairy production subsector has been among the most disrupted by the challenging business environment of the last ten years. Indeed, Iraq imports most dairy products consumed from neighboring countries and suppliers further afield. Iraq’s previously more substantial dairy industry benefited from significant government support in the 1980s and 1990s. By virtue of the protocol for live cattle imports signed between the USDA and Iraq’s Ministry of Agriculture, U.S. suppliers should have some opportunities to export.

